

# 24TH NATIONAL CONGRESS

of the

## COMMUNIST PARTY

Battersea Town Hall: 30 March - 2 April 1956

### Political Resolution

#### I THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION

1 THE outstanding feature of the world situation is the growing opposition amongst the peoples of the world to the Western imperialist drive to war, and the corresponding strengthening of the camp of peace. Country after country which the imperialists planned to bring into their system of war alliances are now moving away from them, asserting their independence and establishing friendly relations with the Socialist countries.

10 Immense new forces in the colonial and former colonial countries are coming into action against the policies of imperialism. This movement, side by side with the ever advancing strength of the Socialist countries, marks a historic change in the relation of forces in the world.

The pressure of the peoples, the failure of the Western aggressive policy in Asia and Europe, the hostility this policy was arousing among other nations, together with the peace actions and proposals of the Socialist and People's Democratic States, compelled the Western Powers to take part in the Geneva Conference of Heads of State last July. This conference had a profound effect on popular opinion all over the world, and has led to a growing friendship between the peoples whom the cold war policy was intended to divide; this friendship has been strengthened by exchanges of delegations and the visits of leading Soviet statesmen to other countries.

But the Foreign Ministers' Conference at Geneva last

October showed that the Western Powers, far from moving towards a settlement of outstanding questions, are still trying to press forward with their war plans. Rejecting a European security system, they insist that Adenauer must take over East Germany and that a Germany "re-unified" in this way must be tied to N.A.T.O. Rejecting even their own previous proposals for a reduction in armed forces and the banning of nuclear weapons, the Western Powers proceed with their plans to arm Western Germany and continue their arms race. They refuse to give People's China its rightful place in the United Nations.

While the antagonisms between the British and American imperialists continue to develop, the dominant section of the ruling class subordinates the national interests of Britain to the war alliance with the U.S.A. The American occupation of Britain continues, and the Government ties Britain's economic, political and military policy to the U.S.A.

The Tory Government proceeds with its arms drive and the making of hydrogen bombs, it helps to build up N.A.T.O., giving West Germany new naval forces as well as an army and air fleet. It continues its criminal wars against the peoples of Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus, and refuses to reduce the term of military service precisely because of the needs of such wars. While it is coming into increasing conflict with United States imperialism in the Middle East, it is at the same time trying to build up with the United States a new Middle East bloc directed against the socialist countries and the movements for liberation in that region.

The increasing seriousness of the economic position in the capitalist world is reflected in the sharpening struggle for markets, the enormous surpluses of farm products, especially in the United States, the growing dependence of industry on credit sales, the import restrictions in many capitalist countries, and, above all, the measures taken by capitalist Governments and employers to increase the exploitation of the workers and colonial peoples and to lower the living standards of professional workers, small business people and small farmers.

These economic difficulties in the capitalist world are inherent within capitalism, with the vast accumulation of profits and the expansion of productive power in the hands of the big employers, while at the same time the people's living standards are forced down in the big employers' drive for maximum profits.

The cold war policy, with the arms race that feeds the vast profits of the big monopolies, puts additional crushing burdens on the peoples in the capitalist countries and holds back economic advance. This policy, along with the colonial wars, overseas military commitments, and the con-

THIS Political Resolution, and the Discussion Statement on "The Communist Party and Young People" which follows, have been published as part of the preparation for the Twenty-Fourth National Congress of the Communist Party and should be discussed in all organisations of the Party.

The Political Resolution is, of course, subject to amendments, and every Communist Party branch and District Committee is entitled to send in amendments to the Resolution, to reach the Party Centre not later than 28 February. (Each amendment should be written on a separate sheet of paper, and on one side of the paper only, which will simplify the work.) In addition, a branch is entitled to send not more than two resolutions on any questions it wishes to raise which are not covered by the Political Resolution.

As in previous years, as part of the discussion preceding the National Congress, "WORLD NEWS" will publish regularly selections from individual and branch contributions to the discussion. All contributors to the published discussion are urged to confine their contributions to only one or two points (rather than attempt to deal with all of the issues contained in the Resolution and Discussion Statement) and to limit themselves to 300 words.



tinued restrictions on East-West trade, are the immediate causes of Britain's weak economic position.

## II THE POLICY OF THE TORIES

1 **I**T is in this situation that the Tory Government, in the service of the big monopolies, has launched against the working class the heaviest offensive since the "Hungry Thirties". Having fought the General Election with false promises of steady social improvement, the Tories are now deliberately reducing real wages, salaries and pensions by raising taxation, prices and rents, while opposing wage and salary increases and trying to restrict the right to strike. The Tory Government and big employers are deliberately working to secure a reserve of unemployed in Britain, which they can use to weaken the struggle to defend and improve living conditions.

10 The Autumn Budget and the new attacks on rents and council housing were brought in by the Tories under the plea of economic necessity. Their real purpose is to bring about an all-round reduction in the real value of wages, salaries and pensions, in order to raise still further the profits, interest and rent drawn by the big employers and landlords, and to finance the foreign and colonial policy of the Tory Government.

20 They coincide with the increasing resistance of the big employers to any wage advances and their attacks on shop stewards organisation in the factories. These attacks, unless decisively defeated, will lower the living standards of the people, and cannot but result in increasing the seriousness of the economic situation which is already evident in some sections of British industry.

The Tories are undermining the whole basis of the social services, won by the working class in decades of struggle. They and the big landlords, industrial monopolists and bankers, who live as parasites on society, are striving to wreck the principle that society should be responsible for the housing, health and education of the people.

30 Their campaign against excessive Government expenditure is not directed against the arms programme and the criminal colonial wars, but against housing, the hospitals, the schools and the food subsidies.

40 **Both in their home policy and in their foreign and colonial policy, the Tories have one single aim—to build up the strength and wealth of British capitalism and imperialism.**

With its hypocritical talk of a "property-owning democracy" (which means the rule of the property owners) and its deliberate aim of restricting the right to strike, the Tory Government is striving to weaken the resistance of the workers to its plans, and to hamper the struggle for higher wages.

50 At the same time, the Tories are striving to build up a mass basis not only among the middle classes, but among some sections of the working class, and particularly among young people.

The Tory Government's actions are only made possible by the collaboration policy of the right-wing Labour Party and trade union leaders, who have throughout supported the efforts to damp down the class struggle, because they too are concerned to maintain British capitalism and imperialism.

60 They started the colonial wars and the rearmament drive; they brought Britain into N.A.T.O.; they took the first steps to undermine the new social services, and were responsible for initiating the wage-freeze policy. Like the right wing in the Labour movement of other countries, they weaken and divide the working class, preventing it from using its full united strength against the Tories and capitalism.

70 Nevertheless, with the exposure of right-wing policy as the result of the General Election and the new Tory attacks, the working class and wide sections of the professional and middle classes are coming into active opposition to the policy that the Tories are trying to enforce.

## III POSITION OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

1 **T**HE rising militancy of the industrial, clerical and professional worker is in striking contrast with the defeatism and disruptive efforts of the right-wing Labour and trade union leaders.

In a whole series of industrial actions—on wages, conditions and in defence of vital trade union principles—the organised workers have shown their readiness to fight and sacrifice for the defence and advancement of their class interests.

10 Since our last Party Congress, the proof of this is seen in the strikes of the railwaymen, newspaper workers, dockers, and at the Hawker and Rolls Royce factories. The magnificent solidarity shown in these last two strikes can make every British trade unionist feel proud of his membership. The growing demonstrations of workers for their legitimate wage increases as shown by the furniture, building and engineering workers all prove what a splendid working class we have in Britain, and what it could accomplish, once it puts an end to the policies of the right-wing Labour leaders.

20 The great rents struggles all over the country bringing together Labour, Communist, Liberal and Tory tenants, and supported in action by the workers in many factories, bear witness to the rising anger of the people against the Tory Government, and have brought many local councils into opposition to the Tory plans. The working people at Crawley, Ilford and Hammersmith have set an example to tenants everywhere.

30 The movement against the Tory foreign policy and for a British policy of peace has been expressed in the two great Parliamentary Lobbies last year, in the great number of trade union and Co-operative resolutions demanding a changed foreign policy, and in the support of a growing number of leading scientists and other professional workers for the prohibition of nuclear weapons and a reduction in armaments.

40 The Parliamentary Lobby of 2,000 Guildswomen against the Autumn Budget and high prices, the campaign for equal wages, and the growing activity of women in the rents struggles, as well as in the campaign for peace and a cut in military service, show the widespread character of the militant opposition to Tory policies.

50 The right-wing Labour leaders of the Attlee, Morrison and Gaitskell type bear the primary responsibility for the disastrous situation in the Labour Party and the failure to develop the united and determined movement which could have defeated the Tories. After the defeat of Labour at the General Election, these right-wing leaders have maintained their fatal policies, and with the aid of the right-wing trade union leaders, crushed every effort of the delegates at the Margate Labour Party Conference to bring about a change in Labour's policy.

60 The crisis in the Labour Party is unresolved, because only a decisive change in policy can resolve it. Gaitskell's election as leader of the Labour Party will result in a further move to the right by the dominant clique, and an intensification of the struggle within the Labour Party. This further move to the right at the top is in sharp contrast to the growing militancy and desire for a change in policy among the rank and file.

The principal leaders of the Left in the Parliamentary Labour Party, in spite of the growing support they have



received from the workers, must also bear a share of the responsibility for the present situation in the Labour movement. Many of these leaders have failed to conduct a real battle for a new policy, have given little or no leadership to the rank-and-file Left movement, or to the mass movement against the Tories outside Parliament; while they have done nothing to bring about agreement on a policy which could unite all the forces of the Left, including the Communist Party.

Great harm is being done to the working class, and the movement against the Tories is being constantly held back, by the bans and prohibitions imposed by the right-wing leaders of the Labour Party against united action with Communists in the fight for peace and against the Tory Government.

The bans directed against the Communist Party are the most potent weapon of the right wing for maintaining their control of the Labour Party, for the right wing can only be decisively defeated within the movement by the united strength of the Left.

From this Twenty-Fourth National Party Congress must come the greatest and most sustained effort that has ever been made to help to build up united front activity in all possible forms, on all the issues on which agreement can be reached as a result of mutual discussion between all sections of the workers concerned.

Every member of the Communist Party needs to recognise that the interests of the working class require this unity, and that it is essential to put an end to sectarian habits of work as well as to sectarian theories. There are no short cuts to working class unity. It can only be achieved on the basis of the most patient and consistent daily work, especially in the factories, trade unions and Co-operatives, as well as in the struggles on local issues.

Of special significance is the work in the factories, which is the basis on which all the work of the trade union branches and all other organisations depends. Activity in the factories to improve conditions, build 100 per cent trade unionism, foster propaganda for trade union amalgamations and strengthen shop stewards and factory organisation, while building the Party, explaining its policy and socialist programme, and winning more readers for the *Daily Worker*, will do more than anything else to strengthen the fight for working class unity.

#### IV THE POLICY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

THE working class cannot accept the attitude of the right-wing Labour leaders that the Tory Government has been elected for five years, and that nothing can be done except prepare for the General Election of 1960. Such a policy could only lead to further deterioration in living standards and in the position of Labour.

It is therefore the most urgent duty of the Communist Party, in association with all who desire to defeat the Tory offensive, and in accordance with long-established British democratic traditions, to help to organise a great united movement of the people with the aim of making it impossible for the Tories to carry through their plans.

In the development of the movement through every form of political and industrial action, trade union membership needs to be increased, the class consciousness and solidarity of the working class strengthened, their understanding of Socialism deepened, and progressive-minded people among the middle classes won as allies.

But only through opposition to the policy of the right-wing Labour leaders, and unity and leadership from the Left in co-operation with the Communist Party, can an effective and really decisive fight be carried through against the Tory Government, and the workers be drawn into the

necessary political and industrial actions on the scale that is necessary.

The united movement can and must be made to arise out of the struggle to secure real improvements in the living standards of the people, an independent British foreign policy, a lasting peace, and freedom for the colonial peoples.

In the field of social advance, the Communist Party will, therefore, fight for higher wages and salaries; an end to excessive and continuous overtime; for a 40-hour working week; higher pensions; a reduction in the cost of living and resistance to all rent increases and measures which are meant to cut down council building of houses. It fights for the abolition of charges in the National Health Service, and against all cuts in the building of hospitals and schools, and for a real programme of educational advance.

The Communist Party fights for an economic policy in the interests of the working people, which will include an end to the Purchase Tax on necessities, alongside increased taxation of the rich and the taxing of capital gains. It stands for a reduction of the income tax on working people, and a drastic reduction of Government expenditure on the arms programme.

It advocates a great extension of nationalisation of all the key industries, and a radical transformation in the set-up of those industries which are already nationalised.

The Communist Party will demand the modernising of all the basic industries, with special attention to the training of scientists and technicians in the peaceful development of atomic energy. It demands the lifting of all bans on East-West trade, and the fullest expansion of trade with the colonial peoples on the basis of equal rights and to the mutual advantage of the British and colonial peoples.

The Communist Party fights for a policy of peace, to secure which it is essential that there shall be a genuine Pact of European Collective Security, the banning of nuclear weapons and no further tests of such weapons. It demands a drastic reduction in armaments, a cut in the call-up to twelve months, and the withdrawal of all British forces from the colonial countries. It fights to secure British support for the admission of People's China to the United Nations Organisation and the Security Council. The Communist Party demands the withdrawal of all American forces from Britain, and the return of all American-controlled aerodromes. Especially does the Communist Party campaign for the ending of all colonial wars, the granting of independence to colonial peoples, and constant fraternal assistance to enable them to develop their own resources for their own benefit and not that of the imperialists.

This constructive and peaceful policy can save the people from the disasters which can result from the policies of the Tory Government and big employers.

It can be the basis for a united political movement in Britain which could compel a new General Election, defeat the Tories, win a majority of Labour and Communist Members of Parliament, and establish a Labour Government with a progressive policy of social and economic advance and of peace.

The development of these political forces can lead further towards the growth of a wider People's Alliance, through which the conception of a People's Government and a People's Programme as outlined in *The British Road to Socialism* will emerge and take shape.

#### V THE COMMUNIST PARTY

TO achieve Socialism, the British working class and working people need a political party which will lead and guide them in the struggle against capitalism, give them an understanding of the new life that Socialism would bring to the people of Britain.

This political party must give them a Socialist theory, understanding and class consciousness, help them to understand the capitalist system in which they live, the Socialist system they need and how to move from capitalism to Socialism.

Such a political party must lead them in the daily fight to defend and improve their living standards, their rights and liberties, and to defend peace.

Such a political party must provide the working class



with an organisation capable of guiding and leading the struggle of the working people right up to the conquest of power and the building of Socialism. It must be based as far as possible on the factories: it must be democratic and promote discussion and initiative, but be capable of disciplined leadership and action.

**The Communist Party is this party.**

The Labour Party is not, and never has been such a party. Despite the fervent desire of its members for a new and better society, and their very courageous sacrifices, it has from the very beginning been dominated by the reactionary right-wing leaders.

These leaders are hostile to Marxism, to scientific Socialism; they preach class collaboration, disarm the workers by preaching the neutrality of the State and more and more stress the need to defend capitalism and renounce even the aims of Socialism.

The right-wing leaders who dominate the Labour Party offer no leadership in the daily struggles of the workers and the people to defend living conditions, liberties and peace. On the contrary, they do all they can to damp down, divide and restrain the working people from fighting against capitalism.

The Labour Party is organised not for the class struggle, but for purely electoral action. It restricts discussion, initiative and democracy by proscriptions and purges.

We Communists do not, as the right-wing Labour leaders proclaim, seek to destroy the Labour Party. We do welcome and support every development which will lead to a still stronger, all-embracing Labour Party, defeating the right-wing leaders and fighting for Socialism. Far from disrupting the ranks of the working class, we Communists work with the aim of achieving one united working class party in Britain based on the principles of Marxism.

But we know that it is only on the basis of strengthening the Communist Party now that this aim can be achieved and Socialism established in Britain.

Despite all weaknesses, our Party has striven consistently to mobilise the workers in action against capitalism and Toryism, and at all crucial moments has shown decisive leadership.

**The Communist Party is able to fulfil this role because its policy, programme and organisation are based on the class outlook of Marxism. It is the only party of Socialism in Britain today. The Communist Party is indispensable to the British working class. Without it there cannot be any significant political advance for the Labour movement.**

**This is why the strengthening of the Communist Party is the key to the advance of the whole working class, and why all Socialists can most effectively work for their cause as members of the Communist Party.**

Since our last Congress, the Communist Party has made important contributions to the mass actions for peace, for higher wages and salaries, against the Tory attacks on rents and living standards, and for colonial liberation.

Our Party members, through their work in the factories and trade unions, have helped to develop the demand for a new policy and leadership in the Labour movement; without their work, the Labour Left could not have grown as it has.

In the whole of this development on many fronts the *Daily Worker* has played a vital part, which is increasingly recognised among trade unionists, Co-operators and Left Labour people.

But continually limiting the effectiveness of our work has been the fact that, despite our splendid fighting record, the development of our mass influence, and the building up of our basic organisations, the Communist Party is not yet

a mass Party.

The Communist Party has not yet eradicated from its ranks the concept of the Party as a "ginger group inside the Labour movement". The failure to explain and show the leading role of the Party in every phase of the class struggle is undoubtedly one of the reasons why new members are not won in far greater numbers.

Because of this, while carrying out magnificent work on many aspects of the class struggle and giving invaluable service to the working class, we have as yet failed to win the whole membership for an all-out effort to build the Communist Party.

We have developed an organised body of workers with decisive influence; we carry out mass campaigns and undertake many activities; but we are always limited by the smallness of our membership. If we had five or ten times our present membership, the political situation would be transformed. Within the Party there is too much acceptance of the present position—too great readiness to work on the basis of being a small, militant force, instead of ceaselessly fighting for and being determined to fulfil our role as a mass Party.

We have not only to show the role of the Party, but to solve the deep political problems of winning the decisive sections of the working class not only on immediate issues, but for our basic principles, and away from Social Democratic conceptions of society, the State, political organisation and methods of struggle—away from Social Democracy to Marxism.

We have to develop not less but more activity on immediate struggles—but, at the same time, we have to bring about this profound political change among key sections of the working class. A big expansion of our ideological work is doubly necessary at this moment of developing mass struggle if our Party is to be decisively strengthened in the course of this struggle.

Many experiences show that large numbers of new members can be won where a confident and consistent effort is made. The number of members of the Labour Party and active trade unionists who have come into our ranks in recent months is of great significance. But it is only an indication of the change that is taking place and the opportunities which must be grasped by the whole of our membership. Winning new readers for the *Daily Worker* is also indispensable for the further strengthening of the Left and building the Party on a mass scale.

**Many thousands of workers, wholly or partially won to our fighting policy and devotion to Socialism, could be brought into the Party now in every main centre if we go all out in an organised and systematic way, overcoming all political and organisational inhibitions and weaknesses that stand in the way. The achievement of this aim is bound up with the extension of the public character of our work.**

The Twenty-Fourth National Party Congress must insist upon a radical change being effected in regard to our electoral activity at all levels. We will never be able to exert our full strength and influence unless it is reflected in the local and county councils and inside Parliament.

This essential change would be soon realised if we devoted as much attention to electoral activity in the localities and constituencies as we do to industrial issues.

A certain effort to remedy some of our weaknesses is already evident, but far more needs to be done. In the coming local elections we shall put forward a larger number of Communist candidates than ever before, and we can win many victories and build up that solid electoral basis which, at the next General Election can ensure the return of a number of Communist Members of Parliament.

The efficiency of Communist Party organisation, on



which the realisation of our political line always depends, is of decisive significance today, because of the urgent new tasks and opportunities that face us. Only on the basis of efficient organisation and constant initiative can our policy reach and win the maximum number of workers and their families.

160 It is essential for every Party branch to organise regular meetings of Party members, and regular political education and discussion, inside and outside the Party, on the role and the policy of the Party.

Millions of younger workers are having new experiences; older workers have seen many of their illusions about the Labour Party destroyed. There is a new questioning abroad, a new desire to know why Britain is in its present position, why the hopes fostered by the defeat of Toryism in 1945 and the establishment of a Labour Government with a record majority did not lead to a lasting peace and permanent improvements in the lives of working people.

Great new opportunities are, therefore, open to the Communist Party to put its policy and Socialist programme before the people, through public meetings of all kinds, in great demonstrations and in house meetings, at the factory gates and in market squares, through invitation meetings, speakers at meetings of local organisations, sales of the "Daily Worker", and of Party literature, so that wherever we have a branch every citizen knows there is a Communist Party and what it stands for.

## VI THE TRIUMPH OF SOCIALISM

1 **B** RITISH workers have now had the experience of four Labour Governments. The workers in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France and Belgium have had similar experiences. Socialism is not established in any of these countries. Nowhere has any Labour or Social Democratic Government got anywhere near to ending capitalism and establishing Socialism. This is because parties of the type of the Labour Party, in their basic outlook, accept capitalism and the subjection of colonial peoples.

10 But one-third of the population of the world, in countries where the working people have followed the lead of their Communist Party, has ended capitalist rule and is advancing to Socialism and Communism.

In the Soviet Union, Socialism has been fully established, and the people have entered on the gradual transition to Communism. The Sixth Five-Year Plan now being discussed in the Soviet Union is a new epoch-making event which will not only make the Soviet Union the most powerful nation in the world, but take it great steps forward on the road to Communism.

20 In People's China and the other countries of People's Democracy, the people are firmly on the road to Socialism. Under the leadership of Communist Parties based on the working class principles of Marxism-Leninism, and with the fraternal aid of the mighty Soviet Union, these countries are being transformed into modern industrial States, capable of giving to the people a constantly rising standard of living and educational opportunities which are transforming the people themselves. Soviet production and technique are now able to give material aid to industrially backward countries, helping them to develop their resources and strengthen their independence.

30 All the natural resources of the Socialist countries are being harnessed to the service of the people, through vast construction projects and scientific achievements which are increasingly making man the master of nature and opening up a prospect of human development which outstrips the most fantastic dreams of the past.

40 All this has been won because the working people led by the working class of those countries, rejecting the efforts of right-wing leaders to keep them firmly harnessed to capitalism and imperialism, have struggled under the leadership of their Communist Parties and put an end to capitalist and landlord rule, taking power for themselves and using it to bring their country on to the Socialist road.

50 Socialists and all class-conscious workers in the British Labour movement need to draw the lesson from these experiences in other countries, and to come into the Communist Party to hasten the day when Britain too enters on the road to Socialism.

## VII CONCLUSION

1 **W** HILE the right-wing Labour leaders are indulging in "new thinking" the purpose of which is to discard the basic principles of Socialism, the Communist Party has reaffirmed the Socialist aims of the working class and shown how they can be achieved in its programme, *The British Road to Socialism*.

10 The situation today urgently demands an end to the alternation of Tory and right-wing Labour Governments, wedded to the maintenance of capitalism. Experience has shown that Labour Governments with a reformist outlook, that refuse to break the political and economic power of the capitalist class, will never achieve the fundamental aims of the working class, and that what is needed is a People's Government supported by the overwhelming majority of the people, with the working class as the essential core. Such a movement could transform Parliament, the product of Britain's historic struggle for democracy, into the democratic instrument of the will of the vast majority of her people.

20 Experience has shown that the Tories and right-wing Labour leaders, by their policy of armed repression and exploitation of the colonial peoples, are destroying Britain and the British Empire. It is today urgent to establish durable friendship with the peoples of the British Empire on the basis of full national independence and equal rights, leading to a voluntary fraternal association, benefiting both the British people and the liberated peoples of the British Empire.

30 It is today necessary, in the fight against capitalism and Toryism, to build the unity in action which can lay the basis for the democratic movement that can bring to power a People's Government. Such a movement requires a broad alliance of all sections of the working people—of all workers by hand and brain, of professional people and technicians, of the lower and middle sections of business people in the towns and of the farmers in the countryside, with a united working class as its decisive leading force.

40 It is through this broad alliance of British working people, and not as a result of any foreign aggression or conquest, that social transformation will be brought about in Britain.

These are the fundamental ideas of the Communist Party's Programme, "The British Road to Socialism". They express the needs and traditions of the British working class, and point the way to the winning of power and the transformation of Britain on to Socialist foundations.

50 But the building up of the movement which can put a People's Government into power requires, as an essential condition, a substantial increase in the membership of the Communist Party. This is, therefore, the urgent task which the Twenty-Fourth Congress puts before the Communist Party.

16 January 1956



Twenty-Fourth National Congress of the Communist Party:

## Discussion Statement on

# The Communist Party and Young People

### I A FUTURE FOR YOUTH

**B** RITAIN'S young people are regarded by capitalism as a source of cheap labour and of manpower for the armed forces. Two years' conscription, fighting in Malaya, Kenya or Cyprus, inadequate educational and training facilities, blind alley employment—this is the prospect held out by the Tories and the right-wing Labour leaders for the majority of young people.

Alone amongst the political parties, the Communist Party advances a constructive policy which offers young people a happy future.

1. IMMEDIATE REDUCTION IN THE CONSCRIPTION PERIOD TO ONE YEAR, TO BE SERVED IN BRITAIN; ABOLISH COMPULSORY TERRITORIAL AND RESERVE SERVICE.
2. INCREASED WAGES FOR YOUNG WORKERS; EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK.
3. A FORTY-HOUR WEEK; THREE WEEKS HOLIDAY WITH PAY; NO NIGHT WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.
4. BETTER EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES, INCLUDING AN EXPANSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION, COUNTY COLLEGES AND TRADE TRAINING. OPPOSITION TO TORY HOUSING POLICY—MORE HOUSES TO BE BUILT FOR RENTING AT LOW RENTS.
5. GREATLY IMPROVED SPORTS AND LEISURE FACILITIES; AN INCREASE IN GOVERNMENT GRANTS TO THE YOUTH SERVICE AND THE PROVISION OF MORE AND BETTER YOUTH CLUBS.
6. END THE COLONIAL WARS AND STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FRIENDSHIP.
7. THE RIGHT TO VOTE AT EIGHTEEN.

### II YOUTH AND THE NATION

**T**HE present and future interests of the nation are bound up with solving the problems of the young people. None of the great issues facing us can be tackled without taking into account the 7 million young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one.

**YOUTH AND THE FIGHT FOR PEACE.** The fight against the militarisation of young people is a key aspect of the struggle for peace. Success in the campaign to Cut the Call-Up would contribute greatly to the fight for a general reduction of armaments. It would help more than any other single act to improve the position of Britain's young people, for militarisation accentuates all the problems they face under capitalism.

In their response to the campaign of the British Youth Festival Committee for International Youth Friendship, for participation in the World Youth Festivals, and for a Cut in the Call Up, many young people have shown their readiness to act for peace.

**YOUTH AND FUTURE OF BRITAIN.** Even capitalist statesmen express alarm at the state of technical and higher education in Britain. Churchill in Britain and Mr. Lewis Strauss in America have declared that the Soviet Union is far in advance of both capitalist countries in the number of scientists and technicians it is training. The decline in skill and craft training is expressed in the fact that only one out of every three boys

receive any sort of training for skilled crafts, and only eight out of every 100 girls. The whole educational position, elementary, technical and higher, is disastrous from the point of view of the future.

**YOUTH AND THE WAGES STRUGGLE.** Hundreds of thousands of young people are receiving completely inadequate wages. Some do not get the adult rate until they are twenty-three or even older. Young people are usually the most exploited section of the workers; not only are their wages low, but the standard of working conditions, safety precautions, attention to health and facilities for training is grossly inadequate. These young people can be brought into the general working class fight for higher wages and better conditions. This would not only benefit the young people themselves, but bring important new reserves into the battle against the employers and the Tory Government.

**YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE SOCIAL SERVICES.** Youth is especially affected by the Tory attacks on the social services. The housing cuts and rent increases add to the difficulties of young married couples and of young people wanting to get married. In the developing tenants' movement, young people have an important role to play. The sharp contrast between sports facilities in Britain and those in many other countries has been commented on by many prominent British sportsmen in recent years.

Ruling class propaganda seeks to present all young people as irresponsible, lazy and pleasure-seeking. If a small section are corrupted by capitalism, this is not surprising in view of the character of the capitalist system and the influence it brings to bear on youth. But the majority of young people are fundamentally sound, despite the attempts to militarise them, and the effects of horror comics, American films, and the millionaire press. They are not satisfied with things as they are, and they can be won to fight for a cut in the call-up, to oppose the colonial wars, and to organise for better wages and conditions. They will respond if they are shown the possibility of achieving a better society.

But unless the Communist Party and the Labour movement give leadership to young people, they can be an instrument in the hands of reaction. Because many of them do not yet realise that it is capitalism which is responsible for their problems and do not see the way forward clearly, they tend to become frustrated, sceptical and cynical. *This is the challenge which faces us—are the youth to take the side of socialism and peace, or capitalism and war?*

### III YOUTH AND THE CRISIS OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

**T**HE capitalist class has always made big efforts to spread capitalist ideas among the youth, prevent them from taking



the side of the Labour movement, and hold them back from struggle.

In the past, capitalist ideas were mainly propagated through the big voluntary youth organisations—the Scouts, Guides, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., Boys' and Girls' Clubs etc. Through these organisations not only the teenagers but the children have been influenced from an early age. While the membership of these organisations is mainly working class, the top leadership is in the hands of the ruling class.

In recent years there have been two important developments. First the capitalist State itself has more and more directly taken a hand, through such developments as the Youth Service etc. The recent publication by the semi-official Jubilee Trust of *Citizens of Tomorrow* shows how concerned the ruling class are about their influence among young people. They are prepared to advocate minor reforms in education, working conditions and leisure facilities, provided they can increase the exploitation of young people in the interest of capitalist profit and use them as manpower for the armed forces. The military chiefs propose in this report a tremendous drive by all the propaganda organs of the ruling class to boost and glorify the two-year conscription period.

Secondly, the Tory Party has built up a strong youth organisation which acts as a powerful election force.

In these ways the capitalist class has attempted, and to a considerable extent succeeded, in strengthening its grip on young people.

In face of this Tory and capitalist challenge, the Labour movement has continued and even intensified its traditional neglect of youth. The right-wing Labour leaders have refused to challenge capitalist ideas, have tried to distort the meaning of Socialism, and have attempted to hold back the youth from action. They fear the militancy and capacity for struggle which is characteristic of youth. The result is that the Labour movement is failing disastrously to appeal to young people and win them to its side. This is widely recognised, especially in the light of the 1955 General Election.

The Wilson Report on Labour Party organisation stated:

"We are deeply concerned at the widespread evidence we have received showing that we are an 'ageing Party': apart from one or two divisions, we are entirely failing to appeal to youth. Certainly our opponents have been able to mobilise far more young people for active work at election times than we are."

The position regarding the organisation of young people should shock the whole Labour movement, and especially our Party, into action.

The Labour League of Youth, before disbandment, had well under 5,000 members. The British Federation of Young Co-operators numbers only about 600. The Student Labour Federation has about 1,100 members. The Young Communist League has less than 3,000 members. As far as the trade union movement is concerned, only the A.E.U. and the E.T.U. tackle the youth problems on a national scale, and the miners, clerks, distributive and clothing workers in certain districts. While even in these unions a considerable improvement in the appeal to and organisation of young workers is both possible and necessary, what they are doing throws into sharper relief the almost complete inactivity of the majority of unions on youth questions. This is a disastrous position from the point of view of the present and future interests of the whole Labour movement. Yet the response of the right-wing Leaders is to dissolve the Labour League of Youth, as they have done on many occasions in the past when the militancy and unity of young Labour people was growing. This action has been taken despite the strong demand from the young Labour workers and many constituency Labour Parties for a national Labour youth organisation with its own policy and leadership. Meanwhile, the Young Tories claim a membership of 150,000. The mass voluntary youth organisations under mainly bourgeois leadership have up to 3 million members.

No one interested in the future of the Labour movement can rest while such a situation exists.

It is the responsibility of all militant trade unionists, Co-operators and members of the Labour Party to fight to organise the young people in the trade unions, defend them against Tory attacks, help organise and bring them into activity in support of immediate demands, and carry Socialist propaganda to them. In the pre-Congress discussions, every Party organisation should consider what it can do to stimulate such activity by the Labour movement.

*Nationally and locally, the main responsibility for giving a lead in this direction rests on the Communist Party.*

#### IV THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND YOUNG PEOPLE

OUR Party has consistently fought for and championed the interests of young people. Its youth organisation, *The Young Communist League*, has been in existence since 1922. *Challenge*, the paper of the Y.C.L., has been published twenty-one years. In its fight against unemployment, fascism, imperialist war and against the Tories, the Party has rendered great service to British youth and has played a big part in winning young people for action. Today we advance the only policy which offers a future to youth.

Yet the main concern of the Congress must be to overcome the serious and dangerous weaknesses in our work in this sphere. When everything positive has been said, the fact remains that our work has been and is completely inadequate and we cannot speak too sharply about our neglect of young people and their problems.

This neglect is expressed in the fact that we often know very little about the problems of young people in our localities or factories, and rarely appeal to them with meetings, leaflets and campaigns specifically concerned with their conditions.

The present and future of the Party itself is involved. Neither in our current campaigns nor in the fight for our programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, can we be successful unless we win the young people.

A great new effort is therefore needed to take our policy to young people and win them for support of it. Most of all we need to direct our efforts towards the young workers, especially those in the basic industries. We must also try to reach the young people organised in mass voluntary youth organisations with our policy.

It is vital that there should be a big improvement in our work among the students, who are the teachers, scientists and professional people of tomorrow. The past attention given to this work has paid rich dividends in the number of such people in our ranks today, and the important contribution they make.

Similarly we have a special responsibility for helping the great numbers of young people from the colonies who come to Britain to work or study.

It is wrong to adopt an attitude which often lies behind our neglect of youth questions, that these are the concern not of the Party but of the Y.C.L. The Communist Party as the vanguard of the working class has the responsibility of winning all workers, *including the young workers*, for Socialism. To "leave it to the Y.C.L." means in practice to contract out of this responsibility.

The most important way in which we can win young people for our policy is to build and strengthen the Young Communist League.

The key next step for the whole movement is the winning of thousands more members for the Y.C.L., and increasing the



circulation of *Challenge*. This is the real test of how far we are winning youth for our policy.

## V THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE

**A**FTER the last special National Congress discussion on Youth in 1947, the membership of the Y.C.L. increased within a short period from 1,500 to 3,000. Since then it has remained around this figure. Considerable numbers of new members have been won, but there has been a great fluctuation in membership.

At present the Y.C.L. membership nationally is less than one-tenth that of the Party. But within this over-all position, there are even worse local situations. In one important borough, for example, there are 384 Party members and only three Y.C.L. members—a ratio of less than 1 in 100.

Yet there is no objective reason why the present membership of the League should not be substantially increased. It could, given more effort and assistance by the Party at every level, be built to 5,000 in a comparatively short space of time, and many new branches formed. Such a success would open the way to still further advances.

Comrades who argue that we cannot expect a bigger Y.C.L. until we have a bigger Communist Party are wrong. The fact is that the building of the Communist Party itself is bound up with the building of the Y.C.L. One of the reasons for the present difficulties is our past failure to win the young people. It is impossible for a League, one-tenth the size of the Party, to be providing fresh blood and new cadres for the Party on the scale that is necessary if the Party is to advance. The words of the Wilson report about the Labour Party being "an ageing Party" are also a warning to us of what will happen if we do not win the youth.

The young people of Britain need a Young Communist League with its own policy and leadership, and associated with and guided by the Communist Party.

Such a Young Communist League should make a wide, popular appeal to the youth and especially to those in their teens. It should not be a "junior Communist Party" mechanically duplicating the activities of the Party and making undue demands on young people. It should have the simplest possible form of organisation. It should be firmly based on the young workers in the main industries (at present there are only about 120 young miners, 330 young engineers and fifty young railwaymen in the League, throughout the whole of Britain, although other young workers in these industries are members of the Communist Party).

One of the main objects of the pre-Congress discussion in the Party should be to see how the Party can help the Y.C.L. to achieve these aims by making any necessary changes in its organisation and methods of work and in the content and direction of its propaganda.

The key to a real advance in the League's position is the help and assistance given by the Party. We are proud of the magnificent work done by the Y.C.L. throughout its whole history. If the cutting of the call-up to the national issue, that is in no small measure due to the consistent work of the Y.C.L.

This has been done with too little support from the Party at Executive, District and Branch level. Often League branches have been allowed to go out of existence when help from the Party could have maintained them. In many localities no League branch exists, where help from the Party could establish one. Where there are League branches, they are often given insufficient political and organisational help, and are sometimes looked on only as forces to be drawn on occasionally to help the Party with its campaigns among the adult population.

But if we give them the full backing of the Party, and put

an end to these weaknesses, the splendid young comrades of the Y.C.L., will rapidly make great advances.

Congress should therefore insist that:

1. At every level—National, District, in the factory and local branches—the Party accepts its responsibility for helping and building the Y.C.L.
2. Party comrades should be allocated to work with the League organisations, while all Party organisations should assist the League in its activities, propaganda efforts, organisational problems and educational work. For every cadre who is allocated to this work by the Party, many more will in due course enter the Party from the Y.C.L. and strengthen all our work. Agreement "in principle" on the importance of winning the youth is useless, if in practice there is resistance to allocating comrades to help the Y.C.L.
3. The Party itself should undertake propaganda and activity directed towards young people, especially in the factories, pits, rail depots etc. It is especially important that Party factory and pit branches should take up the problems of young workers in their industries. All Party branches should familiarise themselves with the position and problems of the young people in their locality or factory.
4. Party parents particularly should do all they can to help the Y.C.L. The political education of their children and their participation in League activities, should not be a matter of indifference to Communist parents.
5. The Party should encourage its members to sell "*Challenge*" as one of the most effective ways of reaching the young people with the policy of the Y.C.L. The "*Daily Worker*" also has an important part to play in presenting our policy for young people and winning the adult movement to support it.

In helping the League, Party members and organisations should encourage the League branches to organise colourful and youthful activities, branch nights and campaigns based on the interests and desires of the young people themselves, and developing youthful initiative to the greatest possible extent.

If these steps are systematically carried out in every district, the membership of the League could rapidly rise to 5,000.

## VI YOUTH AND SOCIALISM

**O**UR Party and Young Communist League can inspire the young people of Britain, in a way that no other organisation can, with the vision of Socialism.

At the same time as giving leadership on the immediate burning issues affecting young people and leading them into action on these questions, we can show them the way forward to a new society.

Young people respond to big, bold ideas. When they are shown, as we can show them, that there is no longer any need for a single human being to be hungry, that poverty and malnutrition can be banished from the earth, they will be prepared to work and sacrifice for such an aim.

They are interested in the great achievements of science, in the possibilities of atomic energy, of space travel and of automation. We can show them that only Socialism offers a future in which science will really be at the service of mankind and all these developments fully utilised for the benefit of the many instead of the private profit of a few.

We can show them that only Socialism offers the possibility of the fullest development of sport and culture, of music, literature, painting. Only Socialism can give to young people the guarantee that their youthful energy and enthusiasm will be used for peaceful construction and not for wars against other young people.

We need to do more to expose the evils of capitalism, to combat the Tory propaganda which seeks to defend the capitalist system, to arouse the hatred of young people against the injustice, exploitation, war and misery to which capitalism gives rise.

The right-wing Labour leaders fear young people, because youth is naturally rebellious, adventurous, militant and revolutionary. It is to these qualities of youth that our Party can make a special appeal. If we do not, reaction will do so.

*The young people of Britain can and must be won to the side of the working class, to the side of Socialism. This is the task our Congress will confidently set before the whole Party.*